



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Housing
and Community Development

For Immediate Release
May 5, 2008

Contact: Hollie S. Cammarasana
Public Relations Director, DHCD
(804) 371-7006
(804) 519-3540 cell
hollie.cammarasana@dhcd.virginia.gov

Secretary of Commerce and Trade Patrick O. Gottschalk recognizes Building Safety Week with state building and fire officials

Officials provide six ways for summer safety

Richmond, VA – On Monday, May 5, Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade Patrick O. Gottschalk met with building officials from across the state to mark the beginning of Building Safety Week, recognized May 4 – 10.

“We sometimes take for granted that buildings are properly constructed and safe,” said Gottschalk. “This week is a time to recognize the building safety and fire prevention experts who inspect the buildings in which we live, learn and work each day to ensure they are secure.”

Gottschalk presented the group, represented by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA), the Virginia Plumbing and Mechanical Inspectors Association (VPMIA), the Virginia Society of American Institute of Architects (VS-AIA), the Apartment and Office Building Association (AOBA), the Home Builders Association of Virginia (HBAV), and the State Fire Marshal’s Office (SFMO) with a proclamation signed by Governor Timothy Kaine recognizing Virginia Building Safety Week.

The Governor signed the proclamation to emphasize the importance of building codes and code enforcement in the everyday safety of Virginians. The theme of this year’s Building Safety Week, sponsored nationally by the [International Code Council](#) (ICC), is “*Building Safety: Where You Live, Work and Play.*”

Building safety and fire prevention codes address all aspects of construction, such as structural soundness of buildings, reliability of fire prevention and suppression systems, plumbing and mechanical systems, and energy efficiency and sustainability. To ensure buildings are safe requires the active participation of building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, builders, engineers, and others in the construction industry.

In Virginia, the Uniform Statewide Building code is administered by the DHCD. DHCD also trains the state’s building and fire code officials through the Jack Proctor Virginia Building Code Academy.

“During Building Safety Week we encourage homeowners to look into important home maintenance efforts that can help keep their homes safe,” said DHCD Deputy Director of the Division of Building and Fire Regulation, Emory Rodgers.

“With warmer weather approaching, now is a good time to look at summer safety tips around your home.”

The ICC provides the following six ways to ensure summer safety:

1. **Pool fences and alarms** – Building safety codes require at least a four-foot-high fence around in-ground and above-ground pools holding more than 24 inches of water. Gates must be self-closing and self-latching and doors with direct access to pools must have alarms.
2. **Pool and spa drain covers** – Building safety codes require pool and spa drains to have a cover or grate to protect from entrapment or suction. Without the cover, hair or body parts may be trapped, causing serious injury or drowning.
3. **Safe porches, decks and balconies** – Porches can collapse if they are improperly constructed or improperly maintained. Hazards to look for include porches nailed to buildings instead of attached with anchors or bolts; split or rotting wood; wobbly handrails or guardrails; loose, missing or rusting hardware; missing, damaged or loose support beams and planking; poor end support of the porch deck, joists or girders; swaying or unstable porches.
4. **Protection from electric shock** – Building safety codes for pools and spas require proper electrical grounding, bonding and protection by GFI (ground fault interrupter) circuits. They turn off the power to the outlet before someone can be harmed. All outdoor outlets are required to have GFI circuits.
5. **Grilling safety** – The most current fire safety codes prohibit the use of charcoal and gas grills on combustible porches or within 10 feet of combustible construction. When grilling cook away from siding, deck railings, eaves, overhead power lines and overhanging branches; periodically remove grease; use proper starter fluid and store it safely; check propane hoses for leaks; do not move hot grills; and dispose of used charcoal properly.
6. **Check your smoke detectors** – Test your smoke detectors monthly and replace batteries at least twice a year.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is committed to creating safe, affordable, and prosperous communities to live, work and do business in Virginia. DHCD partners with Virginia’s communities to develop their economic potential, improve the quality and affordability of housing, provide for basic building safety, and increase their capacity to address community development and housing needs. Visit the DHCD Web site at: www.dhcd.virginia.gov.



(L to R), Dennis Martinelli, VPMIA; Lynn Underwood, VBCOA; Ken Payne, VS-AIA; John Glover, VBCOA; Emory Rodgers, DHCD; Brian Gordon, AOBA; Secretary of Commerce and Trade Patrick O. Gottschalk; Mike Toalson, HBAV; and Bill Shelton, DHCD Director

###